



To share in the blessings of the gospel

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In his first letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul speaks about the diverse ways in which he preaches the gospel and then exults that this ministry enables him to share in the blessings of the gospel (cf. 1Cor 9, 16-23). Over these past seven years, working with World CLC has been my specific way of ‘preaching the gospel’. Through this mission, I encountered diverse situations, contrasting cultures and exceptionally beautiful people.

I fervently hope that the Lord has blessed World CLC in some way through my ministry. What I do know for sure is that CLC has brought me innumerable blessings. It has shaped my inner life and taught me valuable lessons about life and discipleship. This sharing expresses, however inadequately, some special blessings I have received through CLC.

Fall in love, stay in love; it will decide everything.

These famous words of Pedro Arrupe beckon us to the core of our lives as Christians – a deep personal love for Jesus. I was privileged to meet so many CLC members whose lives are marked by this love. This love came shining through during retreats and celebration of the Eucharist. It came shining through when members would share about their life and how they sought to model it after the life of Christ. It came shining through in a faith that triumphed over tragic situations. In these members I encountered beautiful people who knew how to surrender their lives to the powerful transforming presence of God.

An apostle is called first to be with Jesus before being sent out in His name. In a world full of pressing needs, it is easy to get lost in activism, rushing to bring succour in desperate situations. The

most lasting help we can offer is to make God’s love present in these situations. This can only happen when that love is alive and active within us. As Vice EA, it is part of my role to be ‘keeper of the spiritual movements of the community’. To be a privileged witness of these spiritual movements was an exceedingly great blessing. I rarely had to do anything to keep those movements alive and was merely a witness to the fire that the Lord kindled in the hearts of CLC members. The sparks from those fires have enflamed my own desire to surrender my life more fully to Jesus.

Recognize your calling ... and follow it.

I am deeply struck by the way CLC is growing in its understanding of the lay vocation in the Church. We often hear it said that the Church has entered a new phase – the Millennium of the Laity. The lay vocation as a specific way of following Christ has obviously been present in the Church since its inception. Yet, the word ‘Vocation’ usually conjures up images associated with priestly and religious life. It is only now that the laity are reclaiming their special place in the Church. I believe that God has a special mission for CLC in the Church at this moment – a mission to refine and develop our understanding of the lay vocation.

CLC members are actively involved in creating and revising formation programmes that take into account the life situation of the laity. They have identified dimensions of this vocation, its successive stages and the specific means required for living out each stage fully. This is indeed groundbreaking work that has implications far beyond CLC itself. These formation programmes are a valuable resource for other groups in the Church. They also contribute towards building up a solid conceptual framework, drawn from the lived reality of committed Christians.

The fidelity of CLC members to their calling inspires me to examine and deepen my own vocation as a Jesuit priest. This journey together, while opening my eyes to the beauty of the lay vocation, has also enhanced my appreciation of religious life. I have said this often before, and will keep repeating it - my interactions with CLC members inspires me to be a better Jesuit. I am sure many other EAs will echo similar sentiments.

A rediscovery of Ignatius

As Jesuits, we are lucky to have easy access to a vast trove of Ignatian resources along with several opportunities to explore these resources. This could unfortunately leads us to take this gift for granted. My own interest in Ignatian spirituality was revived during the months of Tertianship but it really sparked into life during these years with CLC. I am amazed and humbled to see how CLC members eagerly receive and assimilate different aspects of the Ignatian charism, integrating key Ignatian exercises into their daily life schedules.

In the past few years, CLC has done a lot to promote the dynamic of Discerning Sending Supporting and Evaluating (DSSE). It is true that the practice of this process is uneven across different national communities. It is also true that most members and communities experience difficulties regarding the steps of Sending and Supporting. Nevertheless, a lot of progress has been made in implementing this dynamic, particularly in the area of Discerning. Discernment – be it at the individual or communitarian level - is not mere jargon in CLC vocabulary. It is a spiritual tool frequently used in a sincere search to know and follow God's will. CLC has grown a lot as a community wherein individuals and groups spontaneously use discernment to arrive at decisions. I would like CLC to recognize this strength and continue refining it in new and challenging circumstances. I would also like CLC to consciously offer this experience and expertise to other lay and religious communities.

Another lovely practice is the communal review done at every CLC meeting and event. Every meeting and every pro-



gramme ends with a prayerful review, examining the inner motions experienced and picking out the fruits received. This is a beautiful application of the prayer review recommended by St. Ignatius (S.E. n 77). How I wish we Jesuits would follow this practice in our own community meetings and provincial assemblies!

Personal fidelity to the Examen is another great strength of CLC. Many members have shared how the daily Examen has made them more attuned to God's presence in every circumstance of life. Even as I write this, I see in my mind's eye the faces of CLC members who embody the Ignatian ideal of encountering God in all things. Faithful practice of the Examen has helped them grow in this union and familiarity with

Above: from top to bottom:
- Luke with Fr. Adolfo Nicolas SJ and Fr. Herminio Rico SJ, the new WCLC Vice-Ecclesiastical Assistant.
- Luke celebrates mass in the Rooms of St. Ignatius in Rome.

God. As these faces flash before my eyes right now, I whisper a prayer of gratitude and ask that I learn from their example.

The apostolic dimension of daily life

I have always known (at least theoretically) that daily life is the primary locus of the lay apostolate. However, my own experience of working in institutions has coloured my understanding of ‘mission’. Many a time I have wished that CLC be more visible, that it have a more tangible impact upon our social realities. I have had long and heated discussions on this topic, urging a greater apostolic visibility for CLC. In turn, my CLC friends ask me to examine whether I am unconsciously seeking to replicate a ‘Jesuit model’ within a lay body.

In all honesty, I still maintain the need for greater apostolic visibility in CLC. Our Lord calls us to be salt of the earth, working in a silent, invisible manner to make the kingdom present. He also calls us to be light of the world, shining bright so that all may see and give glory to God (cf. Mt 5, 13-16). We need to strike the right balance and know which approach is more suitable in a given situation.

Paradoxically, my desire for greater apostolic visibility has led me to appreciate ever more the primary mission of the layperson – the mission in daily life. It took me a while to grow in this appreciation. Once more, it was the personal example of members that helped me expand my idea of mission. Here were people doing household chores, raising children, looking after the elderly and jug-

gling all of this with fulltime commitments in the workplace. Here were people living a reality that is far removed from my own. Here were people living out their reality with a passion and faith that can only come from a deep relationship with God. Here then was the Kingdom of God coming alive through the daily activities of laypeople.

Over these years, CLC has shown me how God’s mission goes far beyond a vision based on my own limited experience. It has shown me what it means ‘to give an apostolic sense to even the most humble realities of daily life’ (GP 8.c). It has taught me a lot about being generous with one’s time and talents. CLC has shown me how the religious and lay understanding of mission can complement and strengthen each other.

The warm clasp of friendship

The Bible reminds us that whoever finds a friend has found a treasure” (Sirach 6, 14). CLC has certainly been blessed with an abundance of this treasure. I have been touched to see the strong bonds of community within CLC groups. Members show a genuine concern for each other. Many have found their CLC group to be that special place where they can be themselves and experience true friendship.

This treasure of friendship is a great blessing that has come to me through CLC. It has been a joy to know people of widely different cultures and worldviews. These cultural differences have not come in the way of building up strong bonds of friendship, bonds that continue to grow over time. Perhaps these bonds may have started out through some casual interaction, but they

I assure you however dear friends that I cherish you always in my heart, remembering you and your intentions at the Eucharistic altar

Below:

- Luke with Edel Churu (Kenya) and Denis Dobbstein (Belgium).

- With Mauricio Lopez (Mexico) World CLC President.

On the other page: Luke on the Hill of Crosses, Lithuania.

- With Fr. General and ExCo members at the ExCo Meeting 2012.



have been tested and deepened through our common identity as disciples of Jesus. In true Ignatian tradition, this characteristic of being 'Friends in the Lord' is what enabled us to grow as true friends. Once more, I see before me the names and faces of so many who have honoured me with their friendship. I dare not mention specific names here for fear of missing someone. I assure you however dear friends that I cherish you always in my heart, remembering you and your intentions at the Eucharistic altar. May the Lord be pleased to bless our friendship in the years ahead.

Am aware that I have not shared much about my specific work as Vice EA and the difficulties encountered therein. It would be foolish to claim that it was all smooth sailing. I did face difficulties from the nature of the work itself – a religious accompanying laypeople in their vocation. Different national communities face concrete problems that have no easy solution. I sometimes agonized over the fact that I could do so little to help these communities. I also had occasional differences of opinion with CLC leaders regarding the concrete steps required to promote the life of CLC. However, I felt free to express these opinions frankly in an atmosphere of mutual trust and appreciation. The focus of this article was not to make an evaluation of the current situation of CLC. It was rather to share how my ministry with World CLC has been the

source of rich and lasting blessings for me personally.

My dear friends in CLC, I praise and thank God for you and for your presence in my life. You have inspired me to deepen my relationship with Jesus and to be a better Jesuit. Your commitment to this way of life has given me a better appreciation of the Ignatian charism and of the lay mission. You have opened your hearts and homes to me and have honoured me with your friendship. This journey together has been exciting, enriching and joyful. May the Spirit inflame your hearts as you continue to do great things for the Lord.

God bless!

